BEYOND NOISE

VOICE THAT MATTERS

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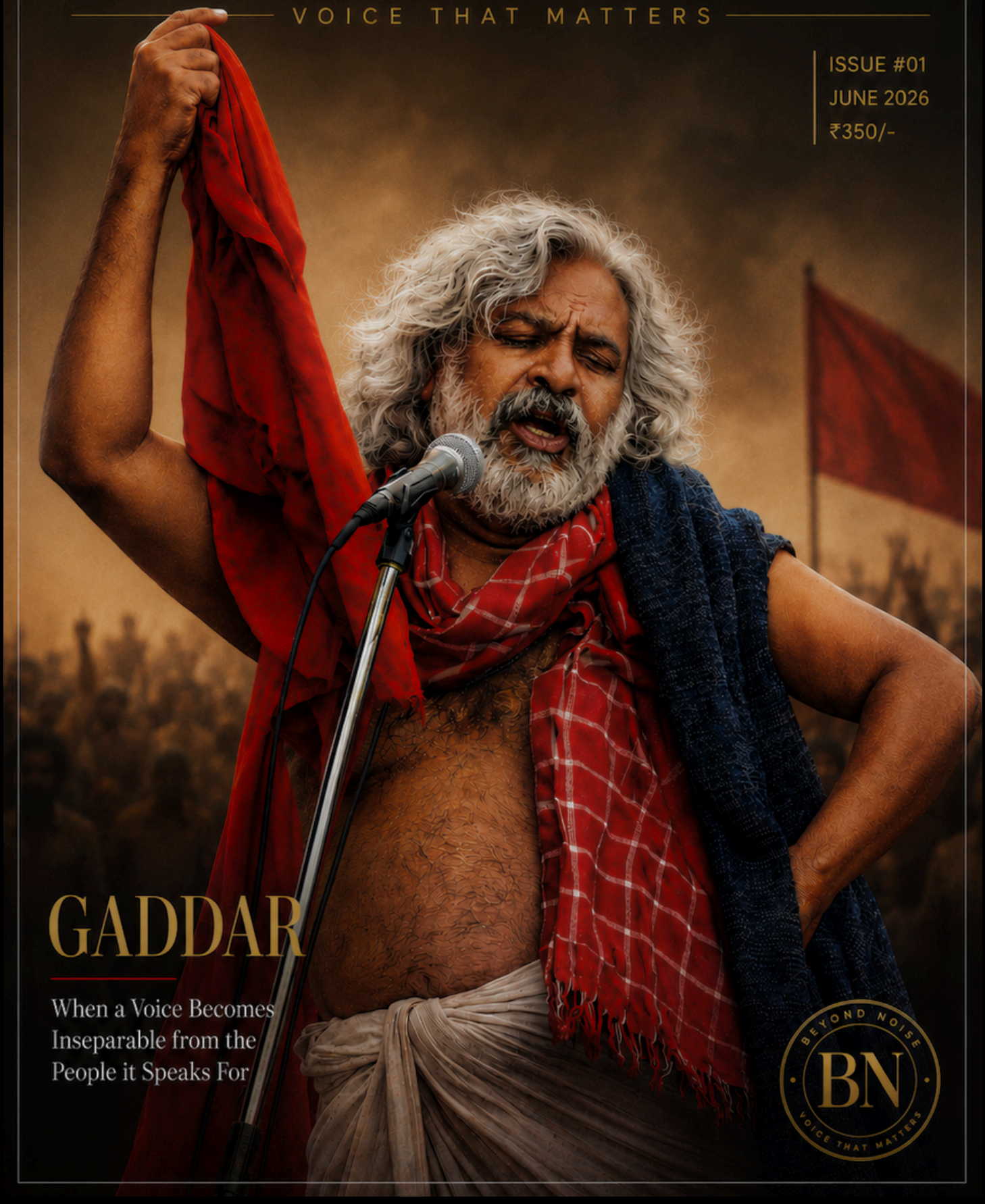

GADDAR

When a Voice Becomes Inseparable from the People it Speaks For

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BN
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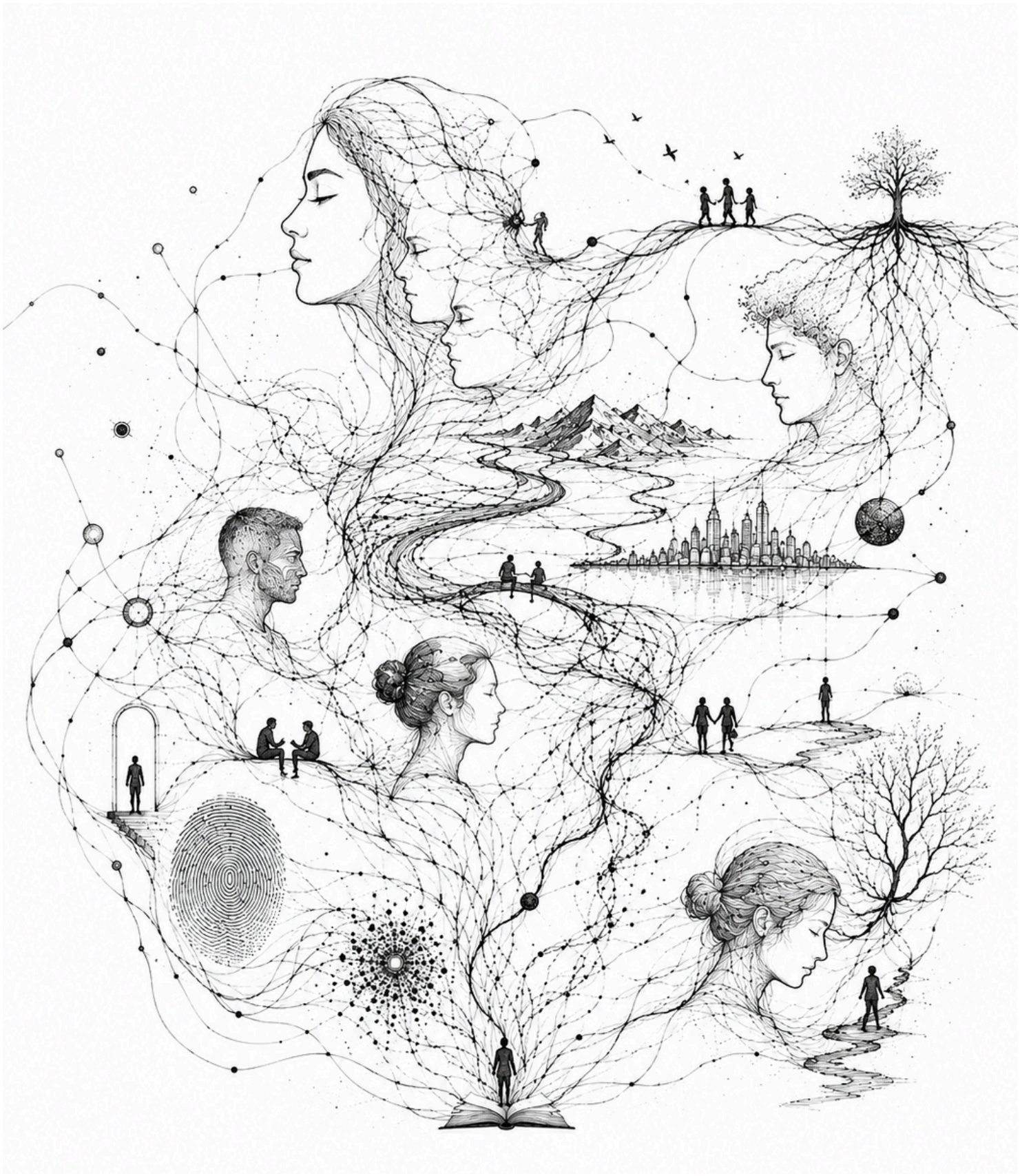

Editor's Note

We live in a time where information moves faster than reflection. Every day brings an endless stream of headlines, opinions, trends, and distractions, leaving little space for meaningful conversations to truly stay with us.

Beyond Noise was created in response to that.

This magazine is built on a simple belief: stories still matter. The lives of people, communities, creative voices, and those creating quiet impact around us deserve to be seen, heard, and remembered. Beyond information, we believe in understanding. Beyond visibility, we believe in connection.

In this inaugural edition, we explore voices that shaped communities, traditions that continue through participation, work that often goes unnoticed, and people whose journeys remind us that impact is not always loud. Though the stories in these pages differ in subject and experience, they are connected by a common thread: the people who carry culture, memory, knowledge, and human connection forward.

Our aim is not simply to publish content but to create a space for thoughtful storytelling and conversations that encourage awareness, reflection, and engagement. Through interviews, culture, public-interest topics, creative expression, and human-centered narratives, we hope each edition offers something that remains with the reader long after the final page.

This issue marks the beginning of a journey toward thoughtful media, responsible storytelling, and deeper human connection.

To everyone reading, supporting, and believing in this vision, thank you for being part of it.

Let us continue to look beyond trends, beyond distractions, and beyond noise.

Sireesh Kondra
Founder & Editor
Beyond Noise

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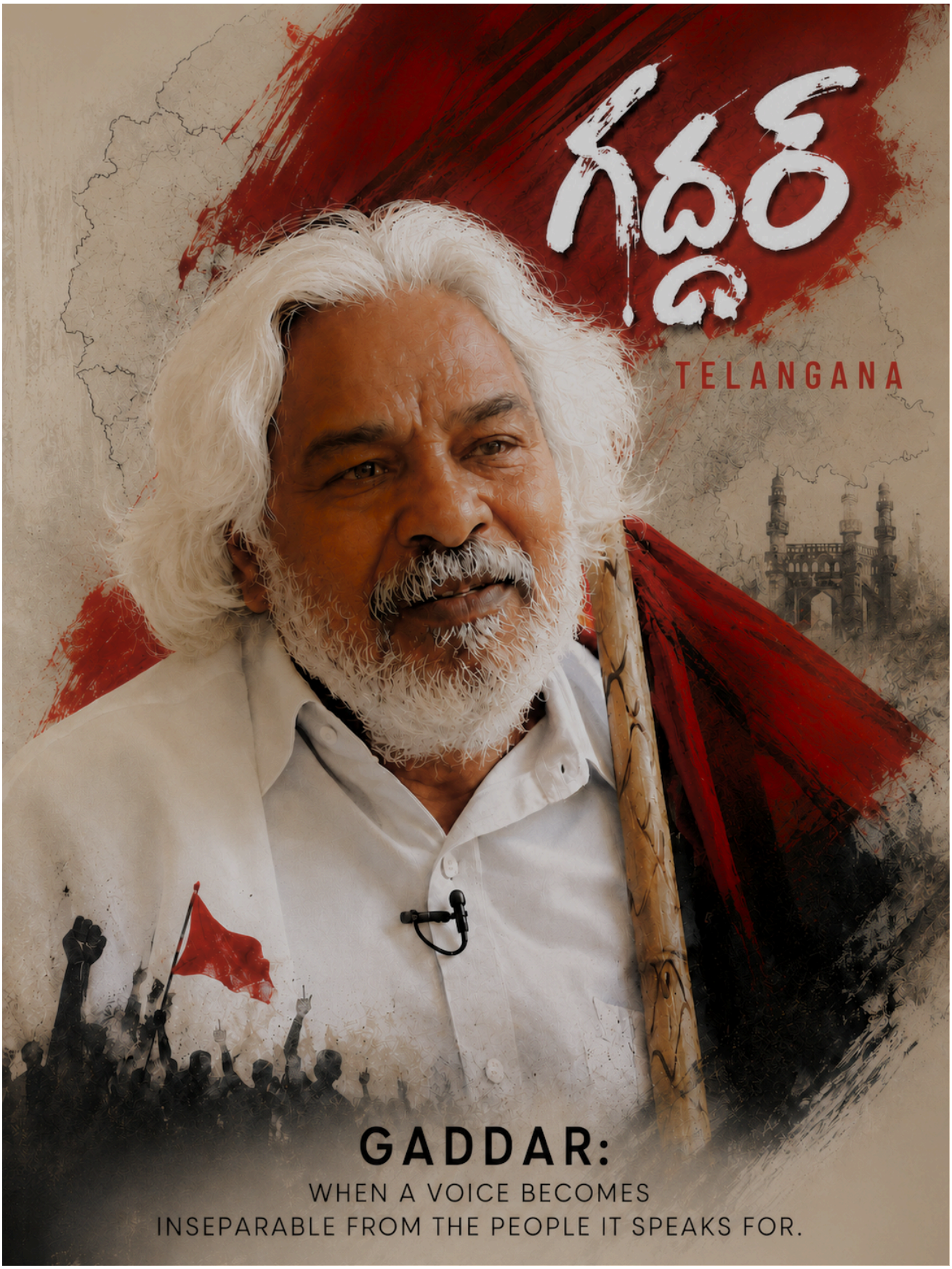


In Telangana, voices existed long before they were named. They moved through fields at dawn, through narrow lanes at dusk, through shared meals and shared silences. People spoke in songs not because they wanted to perform, but because sound carried farther than speech. Words walked better when they had rhythm. Memory stayed longer when it was sung.

For a long time, these voices remained scattered, present everywhere, yet never gathered. Not because people lacked emotion or thought, but because there was no single form strong enough to hold them together. Feelings were lived privately. Grievances were carried quietly. What was missing was not expression, but a way for expression to travel.

When that sound finally emerged, it did not arrive announcing itself. It came barefoot. It came without ceremony. It carried rhythm instead of rhetoric, familiarity instead of force. Before the name Gaddar entered public memory, the voice was already recognisable. It sounded like something people had been saying all along, only clearer, steadier, and unafraid of being heard in the open. This was not art descending from a stage. It was recognition rising from the ground.

In Telangana's folk tradition, a singer is never merely a singer. The role sits closer to that of a messenger, someone who carries what many feel but do not always speak. A Prajagayakudu is not an entertainer seeking applause. He is a conscience, shaped by the land, the language, and the lives around him.

"People did not say, 'He is speaking for us.' They said, 'This sounds like us.'"

That is why this voice did not remain confined to platforms or performances. It moved freely into the streets, gatherings, and ordinary conversations. The words were simple, drawn from daily speech. The metaphors came from fields, hunger, labour, dignity, and longing. Nothing was arranged for effect. Nothing was softened for comfort.

People did not say, "He is speaking for us."
They said, "This sounds like us."

That distinction mattered. It allowed the songs to travel without any instruction. They were repeated, reshaped, and carried forward by others. Slowly, something unusual happened. The voice stopped being individual. The songs began to live independent lives, detached from the singer who first voiced them.

At that point, Gaddar was no longer the source. He became the echo. The songs surfaced in places where no stage existed. They were sung by people who had never met him. They were remembered without attribution. This was not leadership declared or following demanded. It was participation—natural, unorganised, and shared.

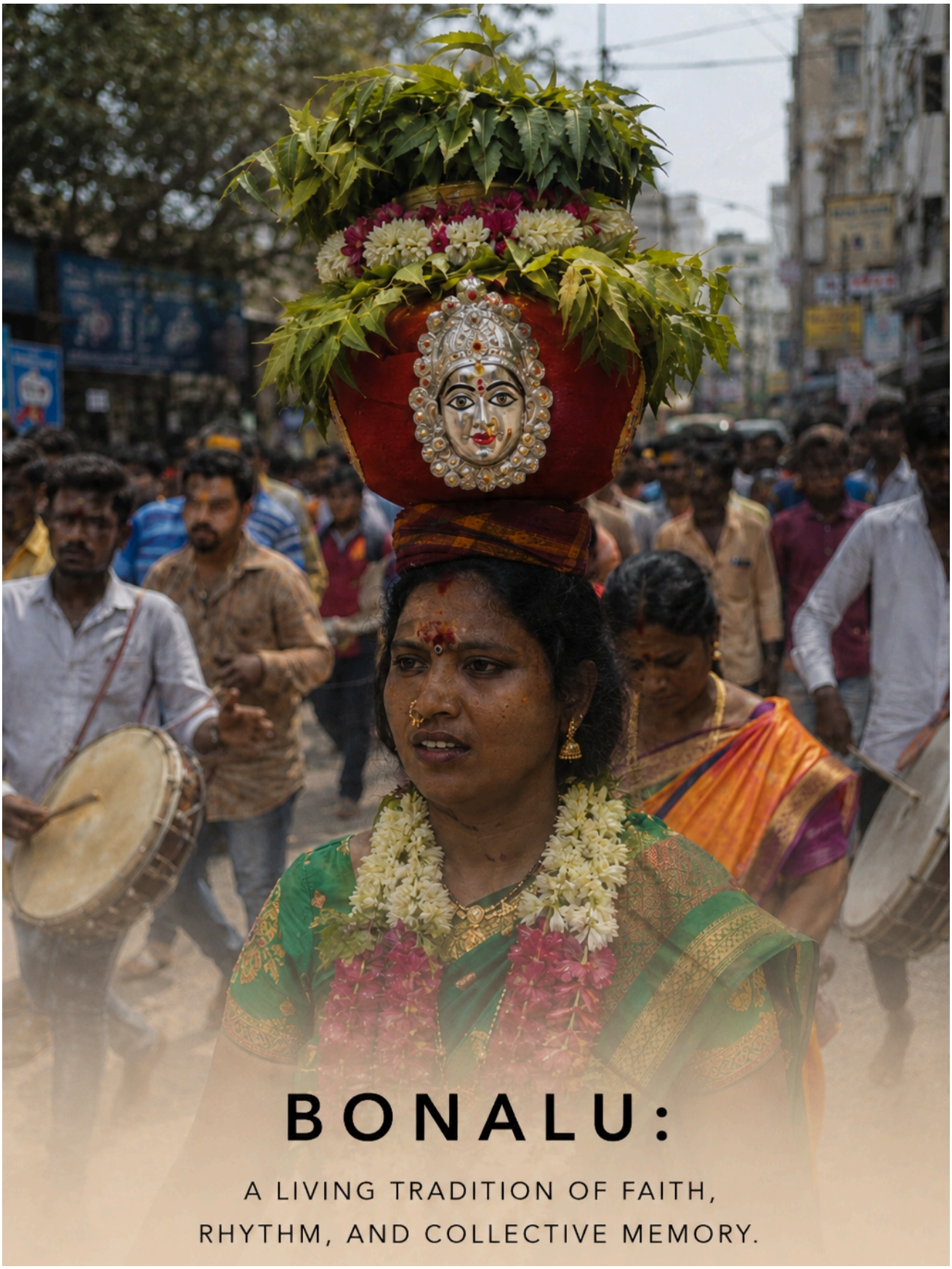
By then, the voice no longer belonged to the man who first carried it. What made the voice enduring was not volume, but placement. It stood where people already stood. It spoke in words they already used. It carried truths they already lived. Without spectacle or excess, it reminded listeners that expression itself carries power, sometimes before action, sometimes even before change.

"Long after the singer has fallen silent, the songs continue to surface"

Like all voices, this one too eventually quietened. But some sounds do not disappear when they fall silent. They remain embedded in phrases people still use, in the confidence with which truths are spoken, in the refusal to lower one's tone when talking about dignity.

Gaddar did not leave behind an institution to preserve his work. He left behind something less containable and more lasting, a way of speaking that belongs to no one, and therefore to everyone. A reminder that culture is not decoration, but declaration. That language shaped by the land carries a strength no authority can easily erase.

Long after the singer has fallen silent, the songs continue to surface. Not always as music. Sometimes as a rhythm in protest. Sometimes as a sentence spoken without hesitation. Sometimes simply as the courage to speak, without asking whether one belongs on a stage. That is how a voice becomes more than a voice. It becomes participation.



Bonalu does not arrive quietly in Hyderabad. It settles into the city long before the processions begin. During Ashada, mornings feel different. Neem leaves hang above doorways, turmeric water dries on thresholds, and the sound of dappu drums begins travelling through lanes before traffic fills the roads.

In old neighbourhoods, women step out carrying Bonams on their heads with a concentration that feels both intimate and public at once. Children follow behind. Shops half-open. Someone lights camphor near a roadside shrine. Somewhere, a loudspeaker recites prayers into the morning air. The city does not pause for Bonalu. It moves with it.

What makes Bonalu powerful is that it is never experienced as a distant spectacle. It is not something performed for an audience. It lives through participation. Through walking barefoot on heated roads. Through balancing an offering carefully through crowded streets. Through neighbours gathering outside temples year after year without needing an invitation. The festival survives not because it is preserved, but because it is so naturally repeated in everyday life that faith becomes movement itself.

> "The sacred extends beyond the temple and into the streets."

The word Bonam/Bonum comes from the word Bhojanam, meaning meal or offering. At the center of the ritual is a pot filled with rice cooked in milk and jaggery, prepared as an offering to the Goddess. The sacred pot is decorated with turmeric, vermilion, neem leaves, and often crowned with a small oil lamp whose flame flickers as women carry it through the streets. Each Bonam carries a private meaning. Some are offered in gratitude. Some in hope. Some in fulfilment of vows made during illness, difficulty, or uncertainty. Yet once the offering leaves the home and enters the street, it becomes part of something collective. Hundreds of women walking together transform personal devotion into a shared public rhythm. That rhythm is Bonalu.

Like many living traditions, Bonalu cannot be reduced to a single origin story. Popular accounts trace its formalisation to the early nineteenth century during a plague outbreak in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. According to widely accepted belief, a military battalion stationed in Ujjain prayed to Goddess Mahakali for protection from the epidemic, promising to install her idol and offer Bonalu if the disease subsided. When the outbreak receded, the vow was fulfilled, and the ritual continued annually. But Bonalu existed in spirit long before this moment. Goddess worship, folk rituals, offerings, and community processions had already shaped cultural life across Deccan

for generations. What the plague narrative explains is not the birth of Bonalu, but how collective memory attached itself to an existing tradition and strengthened it through gratitude and survival.

Across Ashada, the festival slowly moves through Hyderabad, Secunderabad, and surrounding regions like a ceremonial current passing from one locality to another. The season traditionally begins at Golconda Fort, where special prayers are offered at the Sri Jagadambika Temple. From there, Bonalu travels outward week by week through temples, neighbourhoods, and streets that temporarily transform into sacred spaces. Balkampet Yellamma, Ujjaini Mahakali in Secunderabad, and Lal Darwaza Mahankali each become centres of immense devotion on designated days. The city begins to organise itself around procession routes, temple timings, and gatherings that blur the line between ritual and public life.

Among the most significant symbols of the festival is the Ghatam, the sacred pot believed to embody the living presence of the Goddess. Carried in procession through streets filled with drumming, colour, and chanting, the Ghatam turns movement itself into worship. By the final day of Bonalu, it is traditionally immersed in water near Naya Pul in the Old City, completing a ritual journey that binds together different parts of Hyderabad through shared observance.

"The festival survives not because it is preserved, but because it is repeated"

Bonalu draws its force from the people who carry it forward, and among them, the Shiva Shakthis hold a powerful presence.

Believed to be chosen by the Goddess, they move through the processions in deep states of devotion, responding to the rhythm of drums and the collective energy around them.

Through their movements and trance-like presence, the sacred extends beyond the temple and into the streets, where faith is experienced not quietly, but through sound, movement, and emotion.

Then there is Pothuraju, perhaps the most visually striking figure within the festival. Bare-chested, covered in turmeric and vermilion, anklets ringing as he dances to pounding drums, Pothuraju leads the procession with explosive energy.

Traditionally regarded as the brother and protector of the Goddess, his presence is not theatrical in the way outsiders often imagine. He represents protection as responsibility. He clears the way, controls movement, and carries the ritual's physical intensity into public space. Around him, the procession feels less like performance and more like release.

Bonalu also carries quieter presences that are easy to overlook amid the spectacle.

Joginis remain part of the festival's deeper cultural memory, connected to older traditions of goddess worship that existed long before modern recognition or state celebration. Through them, Bonalu retains its rootedness in local histories and folk belief systems that continue to survive beneath the surface of the larger celebration. Today, Bonalu is recognised officially as the state festival of Telangana. But its importance cannot be measured through recognition alone. The festival continues because people continue to carry it physically into the present. In the balancing of Bonams. In the repetition of drumbeats. In the streets walked every Ashada by generations who return without needing explanation. Bonalu does not ask to be understood academically before it is experienced. It asks people to enter it.

"Bonalu survives because it is carried forward, literally and collectively"

And perhaps that is why it endures so powerfully even in a rapidly changing city. Hyderabad continues to modernise. Flyovers rise. Neighbourhoods transform. Lives become faster and more isolated. Yet every Ashada, Bonalu returns and briefly reshapes the city around memory, devotion, and participation. Not as nostalgia. Not as a performance for tourism. But as a living ritual that still belongs to the people who practice it. Bonalu survives because it is carried forward, literally and collectively. Not preserved behind glass. Not frozen in history. But lived, year after year, through movement, offering, sound, and return.

The city begins much earlier than we think. Before the first shop opens, before the cooker whistles in kitchens, before phones light up with notifications, there is already movement on the streets. A broom scrapes the ground. Water spreads across a road still half-asleep. Someone lifts what the rest of the city has left behind. By the time most people step outside, the evidence of this work has already vanished.

Hyderabad today is recognised well beyond its boundaries. It is spoken of as a global city, modern, efficient, growing. Credits are assigned, narratives are built, achievements are announced. But this city does not hold its reputation on planning alone. It holds it on daily maintenance. On hands that arrive early and leave without acknowledgement. On people who clean streets not for recognition, but because the work must be done.

Sanitation workers begin their day when the city is still negotiating sleep. They arrive before traffic, before conversations, before attention. Brooms move steadily across roads. Waste and dust are gathered, lifted, and removed. By morning, the traces disappear, leaving behind the quiet illusion that the city arrived clean on its own.

They stand at junctions, near bus stops, outside markets, along stretches of road that collect the city's excess. They are present everywhere and remembered almost nowhere. Their presence is absorbed into the landscape. People pass without looking, slow down without stopping, adjust their route without asking questions. The work continues at the edges of public attention, uninterrupted by the need to be seen. There is a particular rhythm to this labour. It is physical, repetitive, and without a sense of completion. What is cleared today will return tomorrow. There is no finish line, only routine. And yet, the work is done with consistency, day after day, because the city depends on it, even if it rarely admits that dependence.

> "The city arrived clean on its own,
> or so it seems."

Complaints are easy to make. A road or colony not cleaned. A dustbin overflowing sooner than expected. What is rarely considered is scale. The city produces more waste than it can erase. One night's excess can undo a morning's effort. Weather, traffic, festivals, and sheer volume work against them constantly. Still, the expectation remains unchanged.

Sanitation workers understand this reality better than anyone. They know their work will never be complete. They know perfection is impossible. And yet, they return the next morning and begin again. Not because appreciation waits at the end of the route, but because commitment has become a habit. Because consistency, not visibility, keeps the city moving.

There is skill in this work, though it is rarely named as such. Routes are memorised. Tools are familiar. Tasks are divided without instruction. Years on the streets teach what no manual can: where attention is needed most, how the city behaves at different hours, how to keep moving even when conditions are unfavourable.

When appreciation is offered, it often moves past them. Recognition travels upward, toward announcements and offices. The workers remain where they always are, on the streets, at dawn, in the background. They do not step forward when praise is given. They continue working while others are acknowledged.

This is not a story asking for acknowledgement. Acknowledgement is brief and easily forgotten. What matters more is respect. Respect in how these workers are seen, spoken to, and understood as central to the city's functioning. Respect in recognising that cleanliness is not automatic, and order is not accidental.

A city that takes pride in itself must also take responsibility for how it treats those who maintain it. Respect begins not in grand gestures, but in small, ordinary acts. In how waste is disposed of, in how people are addressed, in whether the labour behind everyday comfort is recognised as labour.

By the time the city is fully awake, the work is already done. The streets look ordinary again. Traffic moves. Complaints begin. The people who cleaned the road are no longer there to be noticed. Tomorrow morning, they will return. Nothing dramatic will happen. No one will announce it. But the city will begin its day the same way it always does on the strength of work that rarely asks to be seen, and commitment that does not wait for applause.

Not everything that deserves attention announces itself loudly. Some things exist quietly, carried forward through habit, memory, and place. In conversations around food today, we often hear about what's new, be it new blends, new benefits, and new ways to consume. But some stories move in the opposite direction. Stories that don't try to reinvent but to retain.

GHăne sits somewhere in that space. Not as a disruption, but as a continuation of a way of living shaped in Hulkoti, a prominent town in the Gadag district of North Karnataka, where what people consumed was simple, local, and unquestioned.

But this story doesn't begin with a product. It begins with a relationship. When Mrinalini Hulkoti speaks, she doesn't begin with what GHăne is. She begins with where she comes from, and more often than not, that means speaking about her grandmother.

About a time when food didn't need categories like "functional" or "nutritional." It was prepared in ways that had been practiced for years, passed down without explanation, and trusted without needing proof. And maybe that's where the shift begins. When something that was never meant to stand out suddenly has to be explained.

What follows isn't a conversation about building a brand. It's about understanding what gets carried forward, what gets reshaped, and what quietly stays the same.

Q: When you think about where this began, what do you remember most clearly about growing up in that environment in Hulkoti?
A: When I think about where this began, what stands out most clearly is that I didn't grow up around a farm; I grew up within one.

In Hulkoti, life felt simple and deeply connected to the land. We lived far from town, with no other kids around, so the farm became my playground. My days were spent alongside workers during sowing and harvesting, not as a task, but as a natural part of growing up. At home, something as ordinary as picking vegetables meant stepping out into our backyard, which was really our farm. Everything we consumed felt fresh, immediate, and personal.

At the center of it all was my grandmother, Gangamma Hulkoti, now 90, who has spent her life nurturing and loving the land. In our joint family, the farm was never just property. It was something we respected, cared for, and almost revered together. Looking back, that environment didn't just shape my childhood; it shaped my values. And even after years away, exploring tech in the US, that connection never left. It's what continues to bring me back to what feels most like myself.

Q: Growing up, everything you consumed was just part of daily life. At what point did you begin to see those same things differently, beyond just routine?
A: Growing up, everything we consumed was simply part of daily life; it was never labeled as "healthy"; it just was. But that perspective really shifted when I moved to the US. I started noticing how foods I had grown up with were being reintroduced with a

purpose, framed around specific “health benefits.” Things like ginger-turmeric shots for gut health or spinach smoothies for wellness were suddenly positioned as intentional choices, almost like tasks to complete.

It made me reflect on my own upbringing. Back home, during moringa (drumstick) season, drumstick dal was on our table every single day (and still is), not as a conscious health choice, but because it was what we grew and ate. Green leafy vegetables were washed and eaten fresh as salads. My mother, who has always been a clean and mindful eater, naturally built a lifestyle around fruits, greens, and simple food, and my brother and I absorbed that just by watching her. That’s when it clicked for me: somewhere along the way, we’ve turned eating well into something we have to consciously do, instead of something we naturally live.

For me, that realisation stayed.

Good, nutritious food shouldn’t feel like a task or a trend; it should feel like routine, just the way it once did.

> “I didn’t grow up around a farm. I grew up within one.”

Q: What role did your grandmother play in shaping how you understood food and every-day nutrition?

A: My grandmother has been the strongest influence on how I understand food and everyday nutrition. Even at 90, she has no BP or diabetes issues, and to me, that reflects how she has lived all her life. Her approach to food has always been simple: eat fresh, eat wholesome, and stay consistent. That’s something I’ve learned from watching her. When I say wholesome, I mean it the way she lives it a full, balanced meal with roti, sabzi, salad, curd, rice, sambar, and even a sweet. Nothing is excluded; nothing is overcomplicated. She also includes fruits every single day. It’s not about restriction. It’s about balance. What stands out most is her consistency. She has eaten similar kinds of meals for years without feeling the need to constantly change or “optimise” her diet. In contrast, many of us tend to overthink food, labeling things as unhealthy, avoiding sugar or rice, and constantly trying to adjust.

She also has a natural sense of portion control. Even during special meals, she eats mindfully, never overeating. Unhealthy food is rare not because of strict rules, but because of habit.

From her, I've learned that good nutrition isn't about trends or extremes; it's about knowing what your body needs, eating fresh and balanced meals, and doing it consistently over time.

Q: What did your grandmother believe about food that has stayed with you over time?

A: She believed that you could eat everything, as long as it's in the right proportion. Just as important to her were routines, eating meals on time, sleeping on time, and living in rhythm with your day. For my grandmother, health was never about restriction but about discipline, balance, and listening to your body.

"She believed that you could eat everything, as long as it's in the right proportion."

Q: Do you feel like what you're doing now is preserving that way of life, or adapting it to fit today?

A: Both. I can't go back to the exact simplicity of the life I had 20 years ago, but I can carry its essence into today. A lot has changed, and I recognise that. But what I'm trying to do is adapt that way of living, so it still fits into modern life, without losing its core. Making things simpler again shouldn't feel like a task or something extra we have to try hard to do; it should feel natural, just like it once did.

Q: If GHăne didn't exist, what part of that way of living would still remain unchanged for you?

A: Even if GHăne didn't exist, that way of living would still stay with me. I would still choose fresh, simple, and seasonal food, keeping my meals balanced and close to how I grew up. Moringa, green leafy vegetables, fresh fruits, and clean eating would continue to be a natural part of my everyday life, not something I consciously turn into a "health task." I'd also make an effort to grow my own food wherever I am, so I know it's clean, chemical-free, and as close to its source as possible, reducing adulteration in my own small way.

GHăne simply allows me to share this with others, but the foundation of it is my mindset and relationship with food, which would remain unchanged.

What emerges from this conversation isn't a story about food or even about a brand. It's about continuity.

In Gangamma Hulkoti's life, simplicity isn't a choice. It's a way of being, shaped quietly over time through habit, rhythm, and trust in what is natural. And in Mrinalini's journey, that same way of life is not recreated or redefined, but carried forward with care, without losing its essence.

There is no attempt here to make it stand out or to give it a new meaning. If anything, it remains unchanged. Lived, not explained. This is where their story exists beyond noise. Not in what is said loudly, but in what continues, quietly and consistently, over time.

We live in a time where people are constantly surrounded by sound, yet meaningful listening is quietly disappearing from everyday life. Notifications, traffic, reels, headphones, endless conversations, digital media, and constant stimulation have made noise a permanent part of modern existence. Yet beneath all this sound, millions struggle

with something far deeper than hearing alone: the feeling of disconnection.

Because hearing is not simply about sound. It shapes how people communicate, build relationships, express emotions, experience belonging, and participate in the world around them. When communication begins to fade, the impact is rarely limited to the ears alone. Confidence changes. Relationships become strained. Isolation grows quietly. And over time, even simple human interactions can begin to feel distant. Despite all this, conversations around hearing, speech, comprehension, and communication disorders are still often overlooked until they begin seriously affecting daily life itself.

For this edition we spoke with Ashwini Nakka, Audiologist, Speech-Language Pathologist, and founder of Dhvani Speech and Hearing Clinic, to explore the deeply human realities that exist beneath speech and hearing care.

Through her experiences with patients, rehabilitation, stigma, emotional well-being, and modern communication habits, this conversation reflects on something increasingly rare in today's world: the ability to truly listen, understand, and connect. Because sometimes, the loudest struggles are the ones people carry silently.

Q: Your work revolves around helping people reconnect with communication and sound. Over the years, what have these experiences taught you about human connection itself?

A: The foundation of human connection is expression and understanding, which are the core reasons behind every relationship. Over the years, I've realised that people silently struggle with misunderstandings not because they want to, but because of the stigma attached to expressing themselves openly. As humans, we are often so inclined toward societal expectations that we suppress and hurt ourselves rather than do something that might go against society. In this process, we sometimes end up hurting the people closest to us too.

When someone is no longer able to understand the same language they've heard and spoken all their life, they begin to rely more on sign language, eyes, lips, gestures,

and expressions rather than their ears alone. That experience teaches you how delicate human connections truly are. The sigh someone takes while speaking, the expressions in their eyes, their laughter, every small detail affects connection and communication more than we often acknowledge. What I've understood through my work is that, as important as communication is, comprehension is the true key to all human connection. When emotions, intentions, and reasons are not comprehended, communication begins to fade, and human connections slowly become deprived.

Q: Many people associate hearing loss only with sound, but in reality, it can affect confidence, relationships, and emotional well-being. In your experience, what are some of the deeper struggles people often go through silently?

"Comprehension is the true key to all human connection."

A: The deepest struggle I often see is the feeling of not belonging. That's usually where it begins.
Imagine being in a room where everyone speaks Chinese. You can hear the sounds clearly, but you don't understand the meaning behind them. Now imagine living that way every single day with the people around you.

There are stages to this experience. At first, people try to adjust. They laugh when others laugh just to feel included, even when they haven't understood the conversation. They try to go along with everything simply to belong. But over time, the feeling of disconnection grows. Eventually, they begin to feel like their presence doesn't matter because they cannot fully participate or understand.

Slowly, they stop involving themselves. Their sadness often turns into frustration or anger. They become irritated when asked to participate because social interaction starts feeling exhausting rather than comforting. Many people eventually make peace with silence and begin shutting others out, not because they want to, but because constantly trying to keep up becomes emotionally draining.

When the moment comes to respond or react, they may avoid conversations altogether. To the outside world, they can appear distant or unapproachable, but the reality is that hearing loss has affected their ability to mingle, communicate, laugh, feel heard, and truly connect. It impacts confidence, relationships, and emotional well-being in ways people often do not realise. What makes it harder is the stigma attached to hearing loss and hearing devices. There is an external battle with society's perception, and then there is the internal battle within themselves and their relationships. Over time, life can start feeling emotionally empty or lifeless. As an audiologist, the struggles I witness are not just about hearing sound again; they are about helping people regain confidence, connection, and hope. While the solutions we

provide, like hearing devices, can improve hearing immensely; many individuals still have to overcome societal stigma and choose to prioritise their well-being despite it.

Q: Through your interactions with patients and families, have you noticed how modern lifestyles and constant digital noise are changing the way people listen and communicate today?

A: Yes, to a great extent. What we are today can be understood as a form of auditory desensitisation or overstimulation. Our auditory system is naturally designed not just to hear sound, but to localise, identify, discriminate, and understand it. However, modern lifestyles have reduced listening to mere hearing.

With constant stimulation from music, podcasts, reels, alarms, traffic, notifications, and background media, our ears and brains are continuously occupied. There is very little silence left in our daily lives. Earlier, people were naturally more aware of subtle environmental sounds, the rustling of leaves, the sound of air moving, footsteps, or even the quiet pauses between conversations. Today, those subtle listening experiences are often drowned out by digital noise. If we are honest with ourselves, many of us haven't taken a moment in a long time to simply close our eyes and listen to our heartbeat, our breathing, or the natural sound around us. We have overstimulated our auditory system so much with technology that our ability to consciously listen and process sound has gradually reduced. As a result, attention, comprehension, and meaningful communication are also being affected. People are hearing more than ever before but listening less. In many ways, modern technology has made us constantly connected, yet less present in real conversations and environments.

"People are hearing more than ever before but listening less."

Q: Building a space dedicated to speech and hearing care requires both technical expertise and empathy. What motivated you to continue working in this field, especially in an area that many people still overlook until problems become serious?

A: I know it's a difficult field because almost every day, I still end up explaining what audiology is to at least one person in the room. Not just hearing problems, even audiologists, as professionals, are often overlooked. It is not an easy profession; it asks a lot from you emotionally, mentally, and professionally.

What kept me going was the ability to truly change someone's life. Hearing is not just about sound; it changes how people see the world, how they connect with others, and how they receive and respond to life itself. I've seen hearing restoration rebuild families, reconnect relationships, and bring confidence back into people's lives.

Every time I helped restore hearing, whether in a child hearing their parents clearly for the first time or in a geriatric patient reconnecting with conversations again, it felt like adding colour back into a black-and-white world. That feeling never becomes ordinary. Despite the profession being overlooked at times, I continue because I genuinely love what I do. At the end of the day, I sleep with the satisfaction that I may have changed somebody's life forever, and that feeling is what continues to motivate me every single day.

Q: Is there a particular experience or interaction with a patient that stayed with you and reminded you why this work matters beyond medicine?

A: There are many such moments; in fact, almost every day brings one. But recently, there was an 8-year-old boy with single-sided deafness whose case deeply stayed with me.

More than us, it was his own enthusiasm to hear the world like everyone else that touched me. His curiosity, his effort to belong, and his excitement toward hearing were truly unforgettable. The moment he was finally able to hear clearly, the smile on his face was priceless.

I still remember his innocent smile on his bright little face when he heard his mother calling his name. He started dancing, jumping, giggling, and smiling the entire day. His mother was in tears watching him respond to sounds and voices in a way he never could before.

This was my first case involving an 8-year-old child with single-sided deafness, and it was an important case for many reasons. But beyond the clinical significance, it was the joy and emotion of that moment that stayed with me. I don't think I will ever forget him. What more reasons do you want to do this every day?

Q: What are some simple changes people can make in everyday life to protect their hearing, communicate more consciously, and become better listeners?

A: One of the simplest yet most important changes people can make today is to be more present while listening. Modern life has made us constantly multitask; we watch television while scrolling through our phones, listening to music while working, and consuming multiple forms of sound all at once. Over time, this reduces mindful listening and overwhelms our auditory system. Giving your ears and mind regular breaks is important. Silence is healthy too. Spend a few moments every day simply observing your surroundings and consciously listening to natural sounds around you. It helps improve awareness, attention, and auditory comprehension.

> "Becoming a better listener starts with being mentally present."

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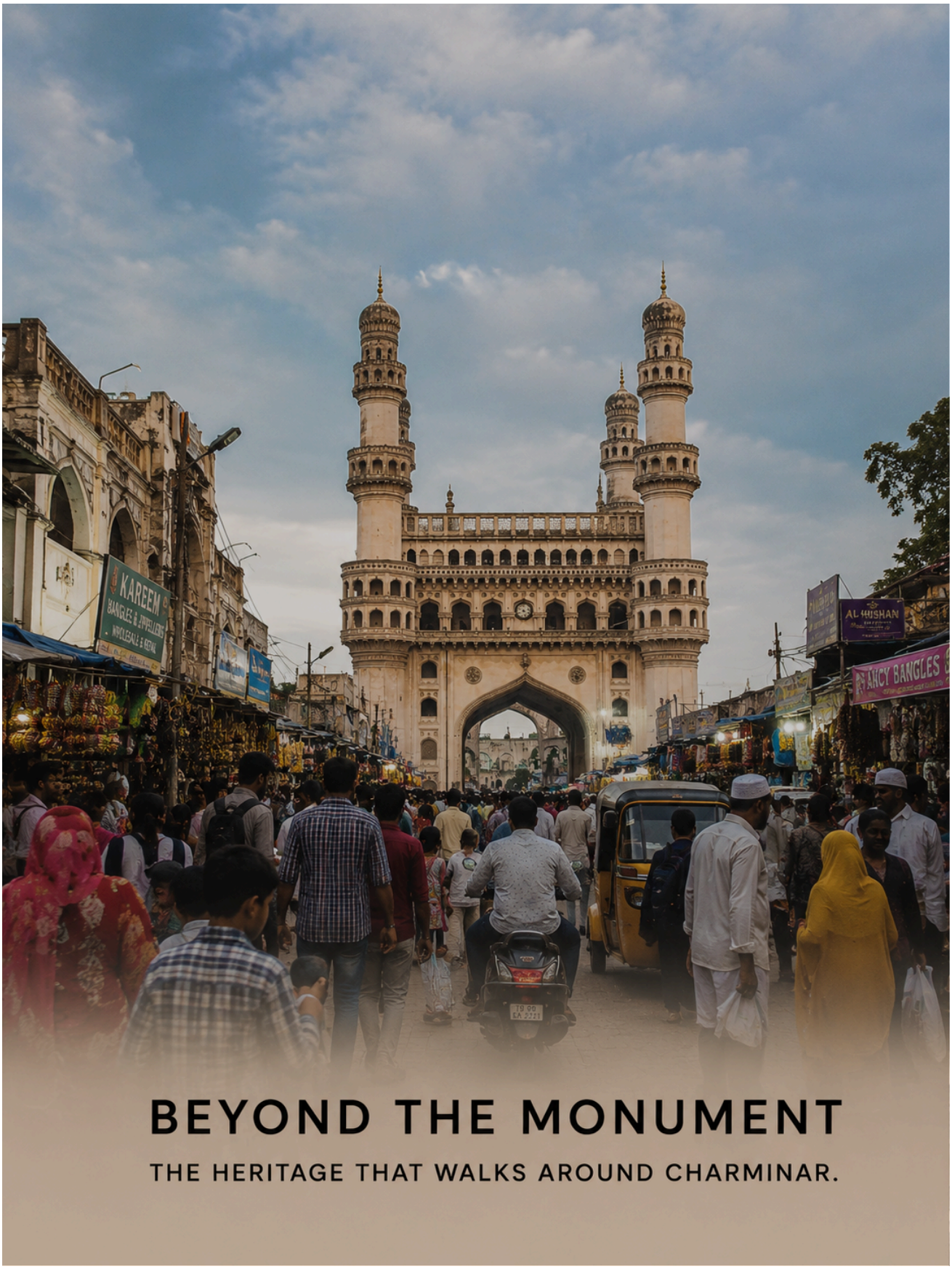
Communication is not just about hearing words; it is about understanding emotions, intent, pauses, and expressions. Instead of listening only to respond or defend ourselves, we should try to truly comprehend what the other person is saying. Conscious listening strengthens relationships and reduces misunderstandings.

Using gadgets mindfully also plays a huge role in protecting hearing. Keeping volumes at safe levels, reducing continuous earphone usage, and taking listening breaks can make a significant difference in the long run. At the end of the day, becoming a better listener starts with being mentally present. In a world full of constant noise and distraction, the ability to pause, listen mindfully, and genuinely connect with people has become more important than ever.

In a world where people are constantly surrounded by sound, speed, opinions, and distraction, this conversation with Ashwini Nakka reminds us that true listening has quietly become rare. Her work is not only about restoring hearing but also about helping people reconnect with confidence, relationships, expression, and the simple feeling of belonging. Through stories of silence, comprehension, stigma, empathy, and human connection, this interview reflects something larger than medicine alone: the deeply human need to feel understood.

Because sometimes, the most meaningful impact in people's lives does not arrive loudly. It begins in the quieter moments.



BEYOND THE MONUMENT

THE HERITAGE THAT WALKS AROUND CHARMINAR.

On most days, people don't really stop to look at the Charminar. They move past it while the city slowly wakes around it. Shop shutters rise one after another, chai begins to boil in steel kettles, footsteps fill the narrow lanes before the morning fully settles in, and somewhere in the middle of all that movement, the monument simply stands there quietly watching. We often call it the identity of Hyderabad.

We photograph it, print it onto postcards, use it as a symbol for the city, and speak about it as heritage. But Charminar itself is not the whole story. It is only the witness. Around it, near Laad Bazaar, glass bangles catch the first light of the day as skilled hands arrange them with a care that has survived generations. A craft continues there not because it has been preserved inside a museum, but because someone still chooses, every single morning, to keep doing it. And in that choice, there is heritage not in the stone above, but in the lives below.

> "Charminar itself is not the whole story. It is only the witness."

If you stand there long enough, you begin to notice things that never appear in guidebooks. A boy running errands through crowded lanes who may one day inherit the same shop his father runs. A chai (tea) seller who remembers your order before you speak. A young girl carefully choosing bangles that will later become part of a memory she carries for years. None of these moments calls themselves history, but perhaps that is exactly what history looks like while it is still alive.

We are often taught to look upward when we think about heritage, towards domes, arches, minarets, and structures built to outlast generations. But cities are never held together by monuments alone. Because if Charminar were to disappear tomorrow, the loss would be immeasurable, yet Hyderabad would still recognise itself. Its language would still carry the same rhythm. Its food would still hold memory. Its streets would still move with a familiarity that no monument can entirely create and no absence can completely erase.

At the same time, cities are always changing. Streets evolve, older shops disappear, newer businesses take their place, and neighbourhoods slowly become something different from what they once were. Change itself is not the problem. The real challenge is remaining aware of what gives a place its character while everything around it continues to move forward. Because heritage is not only what we preserve in stone. It is also what we continue through practice. It survives in the decision to keep a

craft alive, to repeat a ritual, to preserve a way of speaking, or to pass something forward instead of quietly letting it disappear.

> "Without them, it is architecture. With them, it becomes memory."

Charminar has never stood alone. The people around it have always completed it. Without them, it is architecture. With them, it becomes memory.

Perhaps that is why the monument no longer asks to be noticed. It doesn't need to. It has already understood something we are still learning is that heritage is not what stands still, but what continues.

And maybe the most meaningful way to understand a place is not simply to look up at what has survived, but to look around at the lives still carrying it forward every single day.

Every story begins with a voice.
Every voice begins with being heard.
Thank you for listening.

PLACES ARE REMEMBERED THROUGH PEOPLE.

Through the songs they sing.
The traditions they carry.
The stories they pass forward.
The futures they continue to build.

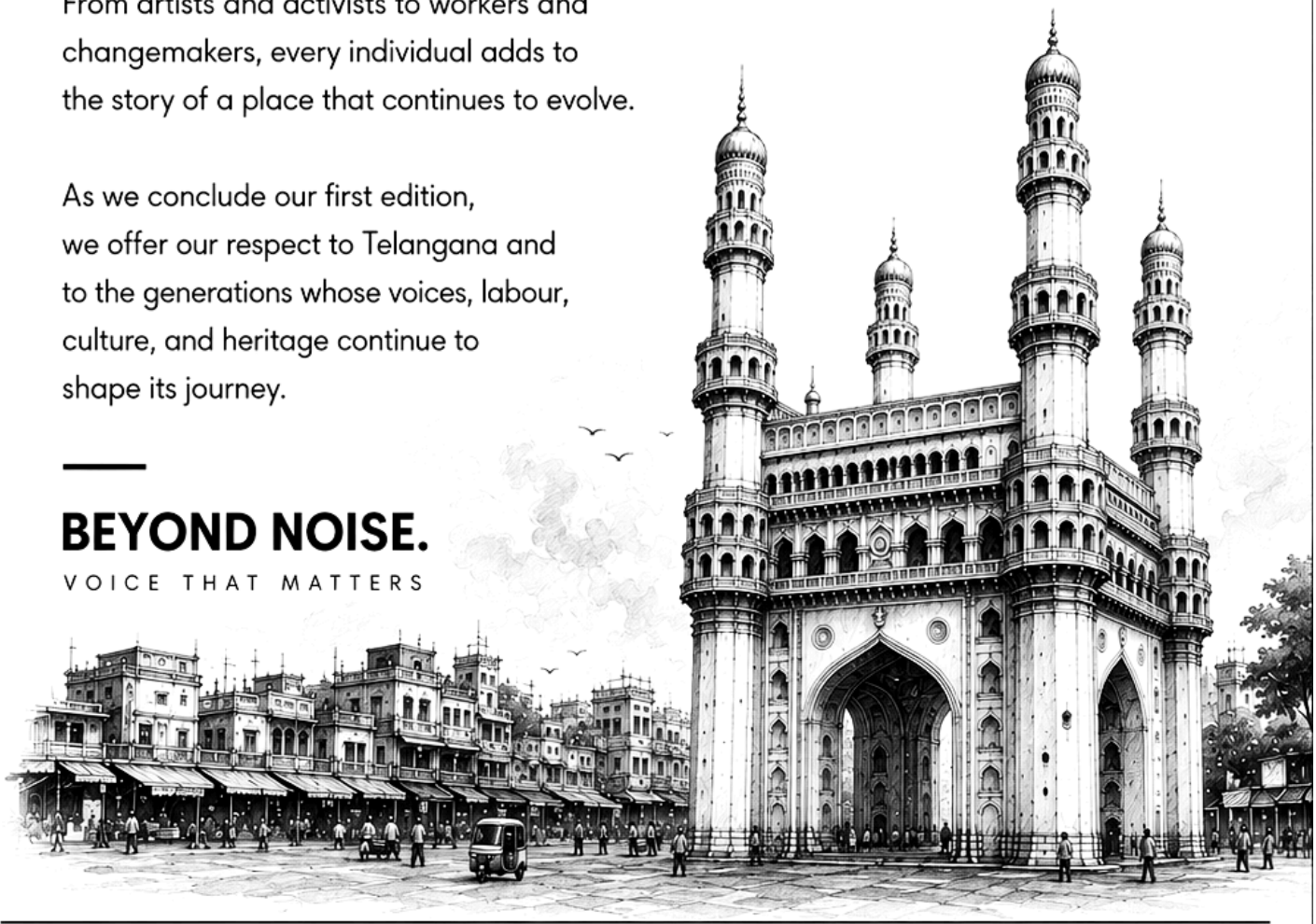
Telangana is more than its landmarks and landscapes. It is the voices, labour, culture, and heritage carried by its people across generations.

From artists and activists to workers and changemakers, every individual adds to the story of a place that continues to evolve.

As we conclude our first edition, we offer our respect to Telangana and to the generations whose voices, labour, culture, and heritage continue to shape its journey.

BEYOND NOISE.

VOICE THAT MATTERS



TO THE LAND.
TO THE PEOPLE.
TO THE STORIES STILL UNFOLDING.

TELANGANA

WE HONOUR YOU.

Telangana Formation Day • June 2